

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INFO USIA WASHDC PRIORITY

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SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

CINCUSAFE PRIORITY

OSAF WASHDC PRIORITY

OASD/ISA PRIORITY

USNMR SHAPE PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BONN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

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TAGS: BEXP, MASS, NATO , NO

SUBJ: AIRCRAFT REPLACEMENT: MEDIA REPORTING

1. ALL MAJOR MEDIA INCLUDING LABOR PARTY DAILY ARBEIDERBLADET

REPORTED MARCH 21-22 THAT NORWAY WILL BUY

THE F-16, EVEN IF THE OTHER THREE COUNTRIES IN THE

AIRCRAFT PURCHASE CONSORTIUM DO NOT. NEWS OF THE

NORWEGIAN DECISION WAS APPARENTLY LEAKED SHORTLY

AFTER THE NORWEGIAN PARLIAMENT WAS OFFICIALLY INFORMED

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OF THE DECISION TO BUY THE F-16.

2. FOLLOWING ARE PERTINENT EXCERPTS FROM NORWAY'S
LARGEST DAILY AFTENPOSTEN:

3. NORWAY WILL BUY THE ADVANCED AMERICAN FIGHTER AIR-
CRAFT F-16 FROM GENERAL DYNAMICS, NO MATTER WHAT TYPE
OF PLANE BELGIUM, NETHERLANDS, AND DENMARK DECIDE ON.
ACCORDING TO WHAT AFTENPOSTEN HAS LEARNED, THERE IS NO
DOUBT THAT THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THE F-16 IS BY FAR
THE AIRCRAFT BEST SUITED FOR NORWAY. THE DECISION
ON THE AIRCRAFT PURCHASE WAS REVEALED TO THE
STORTING'S EXTENDED FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
YESTERDAY MORNING. THE GOVERNMENT PRESUMES THAT DEN-
MARK AND THE NETHERLANDS WILL ALSO BUY THE F-16, WHILE
BELGIUM IS SEEN AS LESS CERTAIN.

4. AFTENPOSTEN REPORTED THERE IS REASON TO BELIEVE THAT PRIME
MINISTER TRYGVE BRATTELI HAS TAKEN THE INITIATIVE HIMSELF TO BRING
THE AIRCRAFT PURCHASE ISSUE TO A FINAL DECISION. HE
DID THIS IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT THOSE OPPOSED TO THE
AIRCRAFT PURCHASE TRIED TO GET NORWAY'S DECISION POST-
PONED. THE PRIME MINISTER'S INITIATIVE IS BELIEVED
TO BE AN EFFORT TO AVOID ANY DOUBTS ABOUT OUR DEFENSES
AND OUR WILL TO UPHOLD OUR NATO OBLIGATIONS.

5. NEWS OF THE PURCHASE WAS RECEIVED WITH SATISFACTION
IN ALL POLITICAL PARTIES EXCEPT THE SOCIALIST
LEFT PARTY. THE AIRCRAFT PURCHASE ISSUE IS EXPECTED
TO BE DEALT WITH BY THE STORTING BEFORE ITS SUMMER
RECESS.

6. WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE LEAK, DEFENSE MINISTER
FOSTERVOLL REFUSED TO CONFIRM IT. THE ISSUE IS BEING
HANDLED IN THE NORMAL WAY, HE SAID, AND NORWAY'S
DECISION WILL NOT BE REVEALED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES
BEFORE THE OTHER THREE COUNTRIES INVOLVED ARE INFORMED
AT THE APRIL 3 MEETING IN BRUSSELS.

7. AFTENPOSTEN FURTHER REPORTS THAT THE
GOVERNMENT HAS RESERVED THE RIGHT TO RESCIND ITS DECISION
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IF TECHNICAL OR POLITICAL CONDITIONS CHANGE SIGNIFICANTLY.
THE GOVERNMENT'S VIEW IS THAT NORWAY CAN PAY BACK THE
AIRCRAFT BUILDER FOR ITS EXPENSES INCURRED IN MAKING THE
F-16, SUITABLE FOR NORWAY, IF NORWAY DECIDES TO BACK OUT.
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